

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 INRE-00 T-03 OMB-01 IO-12 AID-20 RSR-01 /145 W
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P R 121720 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8420

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 1096

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MO LY

SUBJECT: MOROCCO CAPTURES LIBYAN- SUPPORTED DISSIDENTS

REF: A. RABAT 1037; B. RABAT 1048

1. SUMMARY. GOM ANNOUNCES CAPTURE OF MOROCCAN INFILTRATORS TRAINED IN LIBYA FOR SUBVERSION IN MOROCCO. DETAINEES WHOSE LEADER KILLED IN CLASH WITH SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY SAY THEIR DOMESTIC CONTACTS INCLUDED UNFP/ RABAT LEADER OMAR BENJELLOUN. ANNOUNCEMENT EASES RUMOR- RIDDEN TENSION IN COUNTRY BUT GOM KEEPING TIGHT REIN ON FOREIGN PRESS CORRESPONDENTS. POLICE INVESTIGATING UNFP/ RABAT LINKS WITH LIBYAN- SUPPORTED EXILES AND BOUABID REPORTED INFLIGHT. ARMY, POLICE AND POPULATION SEEM TO BE AGAINST LIBYAN- BACKED EXILES, BUT ENHANCED ROLE FOR MILITARY IN INTERNAL SECURITY COULD STRENGTHEN ITS POLITICAL ROLE, SOMETHING KING WANTS TO AVOID. END SUMMARY.

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2. GOM MINISTRY OF INTERIOR COMMUNIQUE (TEXT IN FBIS) ISSUED SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 10, ANNOUNCED THAT ARMED FORCES AND POLICE CLASHED WITH " TROUBLE MAKERS " WHO HAD CROSSED BORDER " FROM OUTSIDE" (PRESUMABLY ALGERIA) AND ARRESTED THEM. GROUP' S LEADER, MOHAMED BENNOUNA, WAS KILLED. THOSE ARRESTED SAID OTHER GROUPS WERE TO JOIN THEM BY SAME ROUTE, AND THAT AUTHORITIES HAVE LIST OF THEIR ASSOCIATES AND " CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES" THEY INTENDED TO CARRY OUT. COMMUNIQUE SAYS THOSE ARRESTED CONFESSED THEY WERE ALL ARMED AND TRAINED IN LIBYA AND PLANNED TO ATTACK ISOLATED MOROCCAN LOCATIONS TO CREATE ATMOSPHERE OF INSECURITY AND UNREST. ACCORDING TO COMMUNIQUE, THOSE ARRESTED IDENTIFIED CONTACTS WITHIN MOROCCO AND POLICE ARRESTED SEVERAL OF THESE FRIDAY, MARCH 9, AMONG WHOM WAS OMAR BENJELLOUN.

3. ISSUANCE OF COMMUNIQUE HAS EASED GROWING SENSE OF TENSION THROUGHOUT COUNTRY BASED ON BELIEF IN SOME QUARTERS THAT DISSIDENT ATTACKS WOULD BE WIDESPREAD AND THAT SECURITY FORCES PERHAPS UNABLE TO HANDLE THEM. AS EXAMPLE, EMPLOYEES AT MOROCCAN RADIO AND TELEVISION CENTER (RTM), RABAT, SUDDENLY EVACUATED BUILDING LATE AFTERNOON MARCH 9. POLICE SOURCE SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD US THAT THERE HAD BEEN BOMB SCARE AND THAT AFTER SWEEP OF BUILDING, EMPLOYEES RETURNED. OTHER RTM EMPLOYEES SAID THEY HAD HEARD REPORTS OF ARMED ATTACK AGAINST RTM TRANSMITTER NEAR MEKNES. STAFF, FOR WHATEVER REASON, EVACUATED RABAT RTM CENTER IN PANIC WHEN UNEXPECTED POLICE CONTINGENT ARRIVED.

4. GOM IS SHOWING ITSELF TO BE HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO LOCAL TENSION AND RUMORS IN FOREIGN MEDIA THAT SECURITY SITUATION HERE DETERIORATING. AUTHORITIES HAVE CALLED IN LOCAL NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENTS AND WIRE SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES AND TOLD THEM THEY WOULD BE EXPELLED IF THEY REPORTED ANY MORE " FALSE RUMORS." REPORTERS' SITUATION EASED SOMEWHAT BY ISSUANCE OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR COMMUNIQUE WHICH AT LEAST PROVIDE OFFICIAL VERSION OF EVENTS.

5. REPORTED CAPTURE OF INFILTRATORS AND THEIR CONFESSIONS, COMBINED WITH OPEN SUPPORT OF UNFP EXILES AND TRIPOLI GOVERNMENT MEDIA FOR " POPULAR REVOLUTION IN MOROCCO WHICH BEGAN MARCH 3" (REFTELS), HAVE PRECIPITATED POLICE INTEREST IN UNFP/ RABAT LEADERSHIP. IN ADDITION TO BENJELLOUN' S
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ARREST, THERE ARE INDEPENDENT UNCONFIRMED REPORTS FROM

POLICE SOURCES THAT UNFP LEADER ABDERRAHIM BOUABID HAS LEFT HIS RESIDENCE TO AVOID ARREST AND MAY BE IN PARIS. ONE SOURCE SAYS ANOTHER PARTY LEADER, MOHAMED LAKHSASSI, ALSO MAY HAVE FLED. (MOHAMED YAZGHI, WHO, WITH BENJELLOUN AND LAKHSASSI, IS PART OF YOUNG TURK GROUP OF UNFP/ RABAT, IS STILL RECOVERING FROM WOUNDS SUFFERED IN PARCEL BOMB EXPLOSION AT HIS HOME JANUARY 13.)

6. IT IS LOGICAL THAT MOROCCAN POLICE WOULD WANT TO QUESTION UNFP/ RABAT LEADERS WHO ARE KNOWN TO BE IN CONTACT WITH UNFP EXILED LEADER MOHAMED EL BASRI, WHO, WITH LIBYAN HELP, HAS APPARENTLY LAUNCHED " POPULAR REVOLUTION". BOUABID AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE PERSONALLY AND FORMALLY RENOUNCED EXTRA- LEGAL MEANS TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL ENDS AND ASSERTED NECESSITY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. THEY MAY FEAR, HOWEVER, THAT REGIME INTENDS TO EXPLOIT EL BASRI' S ACTIVITIES TO BREAK UP UNFP AS IT ALLEGEDLY TRIED TO DO IN 1963 AND 1971. (MOHAMED BENNOUNA, WHO GOM REPORTS WAS KILLED IN RECENT CLASH, WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN ABSENTIA IN 1971 IN MARRAKECH PLOT TRIAL. OMAR BENJELLOUN WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN 1963 PLOT TRIAL BUT LATER AMNESTIED. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BENJELLOUN AS INDIVIDUAL MAY BE CONNECTED WITH UNFP EXILES' VIOLENT CAMPAIGN.)

7. TO SUM UP, CERTAIN CIVILIAN POLITICAL ELEMENTS, WITH LIBYAN HELP, ARE FORCEFULLY CHALLENGING KING' S RULE, IN PAST, KING HASSAN WAS ABLE TO COUNT ON FULL BACKING OF MILITARY TO KEEP CIVILIAN POLITICAL DISSIDENTS IN CHECK. HOWEVER, JULY 10, 1971 AND AUGUST 1, 1972 MILITARY COP ATTEMPTS DRAMATICALLY SHOWED KING HE COULD NOT LONGER RELY AS IN PAST ON MILITARY. QUESTION NOW IN SOME PEOPLES' MINDS IS WHETHER REGIME CAN CONTAIN OR PUT DOWN WHAT MOROCCAN EXILES HAVE ANNOUNCED OVER RADIO LIBYA (SEE FBIS COVERAGE) WILL BE A CONTINUING SERIES OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTS UNTIL REGIME IS OVERTHROWN.

8. AT THE MOMENT, IT APPEARS THAT POLICE AND MILITARY, AS WELL AS MOROCCAN PUBLIC AT LARGE, ARE UNSYMPATHETIC TO EL BASRI' S LIBYAN- SUPPORTED " REVOLUTION" AND THAT REGIME CAN DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH IT. CONTINUED SERIES OF INCIDENTS,
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HOWEVER, COULD STRENGTHEN MILITARY' S INTERNAL SECURITY ROLE AND THEREFORE ULTIMATELY STRENGTHEN ITS POLITICAL ROLE WHICH KING HAS BEEN TRYING TO DIMINISH SINCE SKHIRAT.
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